



# A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

## Take a Deep Breath

National Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Month — November 2016

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is a common condition in the U.S.

Dr. Anne Wheaton is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss COPD. Welcome to the show, Anne.

[Dr. Wheaton] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Anne, let's start with what is COPD?

[Dr. Wheaton] COPD's a group of respiratory conditions, including emphysema and chronic bronchitis, which make it hard to breathe.

[Dr. Gaynes] How many people in the U.S. have COPD?

[Dr. Wheaton] About 16 million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD, but millions more have it and just don't know it.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the causes?

[Dr. Wheaton] Most COPD in the United States is caused by smoking tobacco, although a quarter of COPD patients have never smoked. COPD may also be caused by industrial fumes or other air pollution, including second hand smoke. And finally, a small percentage of COPD cases is caused by a genetic disorder.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some of the common symptoms?

[Dr. Wheaton] Well you may experience shortness of breath or wheezing or chronic productive cough which means that the cough is accompanied by phlegm or sputum. These symptoms can significantly impact patient's daily activities. People with COPD may have trouble just running errands or walking or climbing stairs. In addition to these chronic symptoms, patients periodically experience flare-ups during which symptoms get more severe than usual and could even mean a trip to the hospital. If the symptoms sound familiar, especially if you're a smoker or used to smoke, it's very important to visit your health care provider and have a breathing test done to confirm a diagnosis.

[Dr. Gaynes] How is COPD treated or managed?

[Dr. Wheaton] Well the first thing is that smokers need to make every effort to quit smoking. Just because you've already developed COPD doesn't mean it's too late to quit. Quitting can slow the

progression of COPD and may mean fewer symptoms or flare-ups which could mean less chance of having to go to the hospital. But there are also many medications available to treat COPD. It's important to follow your doctor's instructions, though. For instance, if your doctors advise you to take a medication every day, don't skip a dose because you feel OK that day. If your COPD causes low blood oxygen levels, your physician may also prescribe supplemental oxygen. Another important aspect of COPD treatment is pulmonary rehabilitation. This combines patient education, learning breathing techniques, and exercise training to improve quality of life. These personalized plans help manage your symptoms and improve your stamina.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there ways to prevent the development of COPD?

[Dr. Wheaton] Well, since the main cause of COPD is smoking cigarettes, if you smoke, quit. But if you don't smoke, don't start.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about this disease?

[Dr. Wheaton] Listeners can go to [cdc.gov/COPD](http://cdc.gov/COPD).

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Anne. I've been talking today with Dr. Anne Wheaton about COPD. Common symptoms of COPD include coughing, shortness of breath, excess phlegm or sputum, wheezing, and difficulty taking a deep breath. If you're experiencing any of these problems, see your health care provider as soon as possible.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Bob Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.